

Annual Report
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER
OF HEALTH

TO THE
HARPENDEN
Urban District Council

FOR THE YEAR 1923



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Annual Report for 1923

GENTLEMEN,

This, like that of last year, is desired to be an ordinary report and consists mostly of statistics.

I have to thank the Sanitary Inspector, Mr. Leverton, for his assistance in its preparation.

Yours faithfully,

HUGH FRASER, M.A., M.B., C.M.



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I. GENERAL STATISTICS

Area (acres)	1,631
Population (census 1921)	6,738
Number of inhabited houses (1921)	1,527
Number of families or separate occupiers (1921)	....	....	....	....	....	....	1,600
Rateable value	....	....	....	....	....	....	£53,210
Sum represented by a penny rate	....	....	....	....	....	....	£180

2. EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR:—

		TOTAL.	M.	F.		
Births	{ Legitimate	99	45	44	Birth Rate (R.G.)	14.9
	{ Illegitimate	—	—	—		
Deaths		46	21	25	Death Rate (R.G.)	6.9

Number of women dying in, or in consequence of, child-birth:—

From sepsis	....	....	....	0
,, other causes	0

Deaths of Infants under one year per 1,000 births:—

(Legitimate, 5); Total	50
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Deaths from Measles (all ages)	0
,, Whooping Cough (all ages)	0
,, Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	0

CAUSES OF DEATH

							M.	F.
All Causes	....	....	....	....	....	....	21	25
1	Enteric Fever	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
2	Small-pox	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
3	Measles	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
4	Scarlet Fever	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
5	Whooping Cough	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
6	Diphtheria	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
7	Influenza	....	....	....	....	....	—	1
8	Encephalitis Lethargica	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
9	Meningococcal Meningitis	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
10	Tuberculosis of Respiratory System	....	....	....	....	....	2	1
11	Other Tuberculous Diseases	....	....	....	....	....	1	1
12	Cancer, malignant disease	....	....	....	....	....	2	5
13	Rheumatic Fever	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
14	Diabetes	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
15	Cerebral Hæmorrhage, &c.	....	....	....	....	....	1	1
16	Heart Disease	....	....	....	....	....	1	1
17	Arterio-sclerosis	....	....	....	....	....	3	3
18	Bronchitis	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
19	Pneumonia (all forms)	....	....	....	....	....	3	4
20	Other Respiratory Diseases	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
21	Ulcer of Stomach or Duodenum	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
22	Diarrhoea, &c. (under 2 years)	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
23	Appendicitis and typhlitis	....	....	....	....	....	—	1
24	Cirrhosis of Liver	....	....	....	....	....	1	—
25	Acute and Chronic Nephritis	....	....	....	....	....	1	2
26	Puerperal Sepsis	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
27	Other accidents and diseases of Pregnancy and Parturition	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
28	Congenital Debility and Malformation, Premature Birth	....	....	....	....	....	3	—
29	Suicide	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
30	Other Deaths from Violence	....	....	....	....	....	—	1
31	Other Defined Diseases	....	....	....	....	....	3	4
32	Causes Ill-defined or Unknown	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
Special Causes (included above)								
	Polioomyelitis	....	....	....	....	....	—	—
	Polioncephalitis	....	....	....	....	....	—	—

Table showing the comparative figures of this district with the provisional figures of the Registrar-General for England and Wales:—

				Birth Rate.	Infant Mortality Rate.	Death Rate.
Harpenden U.D.	....	....	....	14.9	50	6.9
England and Wales	....	....	....	19.7	69	11.6

The population, as estimated by the General Register Office, Somerset House, is 6,625.

3. NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR

Diseases.				Total Cases Notified.	Cases Ad- mitted to Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Diphtheria	....	....	....	9	8	—
Scarlet Fever	....	....	....	27	22	—
Enteric Fever	....	....	....	—	—	—
Puerperal Fever	...	....	....	—	—	—
Pneumonia	....	....	....	—	—	2
Other Diseases Generally Noti- fiable:—						
Erysipelas	....	....	....	3	—	—
Tuberculosis:—						
(a) Pulmonary	M.	6		12	—	2
	F.	6				
	Total	12				
(b) Non-Pulmonary	M.	2		3	—	1
	F.	1				
	Total	3				

Ophthalmic Neonatorum.	Cases.			Vision Unimpaired.	Vision Impaired.	Total Blindness.	Deaths.
	Notified	Treated.					
		At Home.	In Hospital				
	I	I	—	I	—	—	—

St. John's School (C.E. 86 A.) was closed on 9th January for three weeks for measles. On 17th January the C.E. School 86 (Infant Department) was closed until 29th January, and on 22nd January the Junior department of the mixed County Council School for the same cause.

5. SUMMARY (for reference) OF NURSING ARRANGEMENTS, HOSPITALS, AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS AVAILABLE FOR THE DISTRICT

PROFESSIONAL NURSING IN THE HOME

(a) GENERAL. In this district the duty is taken up by the Harpenden Nursing Centre developed as a War Memorial, with premises commodious and convenient. The funds are provided practically by voluntary subscriptions. Small contributions are made by the Herts County Council and the London County Council. No contribution is made by the local authority. Three nurses are in residence permanently; one for general nursing and school work; one as a midwife; and one mainly for in-patients and clinics.

(b) FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES, E.G., MEASLES. In epidemics in the past the Council has engaged special nurses **ad hoc**.

MIDWIVES. The Council does not employ nor does it subsidise midwives practising in the district. There are two such midwives.

CLINIC AND TREATMENT CENTRES. The Maternity and Child Welfare Centre (Consultation and Treatment) is the Harpenden Nursing Centre, Luton Road. Here also are provided the school clinics for dental work and ophthalmic cases, and cases of enlarged tonsils and adenoids. There is excellent accommodation. Tuberculosis treatment is carried on by the County Council which also makes arrangements with various general hospitals for the treatment of venereal diseases.

HOSPITALS PROVIDED OR SUBSIDISED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OR BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

(1) TUBERCULOSIS. This is done by the County.

(2) MATERNITY. Cases are admitted, if urgent, to the Harpenden Nursing Centre.

(3) CHILDREN. None.

(4) FEVER. Cases of diphtheria or scarlet fever are admitted to the Sisters Hospital, St. Albans, which is maintained jointly by the St. Albans City Corporation, the St. Albans Rural District, and the Harpenden Urban District.

Small-pox cases are similarly dealt with at the Hospital at Cherry Trees, near Hemel Hempstead. The accommodation for such fever cases has been sufficient. There is no provision for enteric fever.

There is no institutional provision for unmarried mothers, illegitimate infants, and homeless children in the district.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES. (a) FOR INFECTIOUS CASES. A motor ambulance is available at the Sisters Hospital, St. Albans, very promptly on receipt of a telephone message.

(b) FOR NON-INFECTIOUS AND ACCIDENT CASES, a motor ambulance can be obtained from St. Albans by telephoning the County Police Station.

6. LABORATORY WORK

Pathological and bacteriological examinations are made by arrangement with the Royal Institute of Public Health, Russell Square. 38 throat swabs were examined for the presence of the diphtheria bacillus. Diphtheria Antitoxin is provided by the Council in necessitous cases. Ten specimens of sputum were examined for the tubercle bacillus.

A sample of the Public Water Supply was again analysed by Professor Kenwood. At the end of a detailed chemical analysis he stated that the water maintained a high degree of purity and was a little less hard than the previous year's sample (26 instead of 28).

7. SANITARY ADMINISTRATION

List of Adoptive Acts, Bye-Laws and Regulations in force in the District, with dates of adoption:—

(a) Adoptive Acts in force:—

Infectious Disease Prevention Act, 1890	} 1898
Public Health Acts (Amendment Act, 1890) Part III.	
Majority of the Adoptive parts of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907. 26 Oct., 1909.	

(b) Bye-laws (approved 5 Sept., 1913).

New Streets and Buildings.
 Drainage of Existing Buildings.
 Prevention of Nuisances.
 Slaughter Houses.
 Means of Escape in Case of Fire.

Houses Let in Lodgings.	} Aug. 31, 1900.
Common Lodging Houses	
Tents, Vans, Sheds, &c.	
Offensive Trades.	
Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshop Regulations.	

The work of Sanitary Administration is carried on mainly through the Sanitary Committee, which meets once a month.

Sanitary Inspection of the District:—1923.

Houses inspected in routine	349
,, ,, on complaint	14
,, ,, after infectious disease	41
Visits to Schools	12
Inspections of Bakehouses	12
,, Laundries	6
,, Slaughterhouses	6
,, Cowsheds	6
,, Factories and Workshops	35
Privies abolished	8
Privies and pail closets converted to water closets	22
New drains constructed	71
Premises connected to sewers	68
Yards paved or paving repaired.	4
New dustbins provided	30
Premises disinfected	36
Cases of overcrowding abated	4
Premises repaired, roofs, ceilings, walls, etc., and cleansed	48
Nuisances from dampness abated	10
Nuisances from animals, pigs, fowls, etc., abated	4
Cesspools emptied by Council's men	18
Cesspools abolished	21
Sample of water analysed	1
Premises condemned	0
Notices served (statutory)	12
,, ,, (preliminary)	42

Cowsheds, Dairies and Slaughter Houses have been regularly inspected and periodically lime-whited. Bakehouses (6) are all in conformity with the Act. None are underground. All have a supply of Company's water; there are no drains inside the premises, which are regularly lime-whited.

Premises under the Factory and Workshops Act, 1901, have been kept under observation so as to ensure the sanitary conditions being in accordance with the Act. White-washing and cleansing have been carried out; four extra w.c.s provided;

repairs made to w.c.s, and stopped drains remedied. H.M.'s Factory Inspector has visited the district. No complaints were made to the Council. Workers living in houses where infectious disease occurred, or outworkers taking in work at home (such as hat-making), have been prevented from following their occupation during the infectious period.

8. PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

The staff consists of the Medical Officer of Health (part time), and the Sanitary Inspector (whole time). Both have contributions to their salary under the Public Health Acts.

9. HOUSING

Number of new houses erected during the year:—

(a) Total	36
(b) As part of a municipal housing scheme	0

1. *Unfit dwelling houses.*

Inspection—(1) Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	349
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910	60
(3) Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	1
(4) Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	30

2. *Remedy of Defects without Service of Formal Notices.*

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	25
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3. *Action under Statutory Powers.*

A.—Proceedings under section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1919.

(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	40
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit:—	
(a) by owners	40
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners	0

(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close	0
B.—Proceedings under Public Health Acts.	
(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served (requiring defects to be remedied)	40
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied:—	
(a) by owners	40
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners	0
C.—Proceedings under sections 17 and 18 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1909	
(1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders	1
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made	1
(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling-houses having been rendered fit	0
(4) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	0
(5) Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	0

Nothing further has been done by the Council to utilize the site purchased for the erection of cottages.

“The Housing &c. Act, 1923,” has come into force since my last report. Under its provisions, local authorities may formulate schemes for assisting builders and others to build cottages. A subsidy may be granted if certain conditions are complied with.

The Council, in November, issued a leaflet entitled ‘Financial assistance offered by the Harpenden Urban District Council to Builders, Property Investors, and others erecting small dwellings within the Harpenden Urban District’.

Compliance with the regulations, which are given in detail, entitles the owner to a lump sum of £80 per house on the final certificate of the surveyor on completion.

Only 7 applications for the grant have been made, and in 6 cases the work is well in hand.

The Sanitary Committee has considered 83 plans during the year, 43 of which were for dwelling-houses—not cottages.

The absence of a public mortuary for the reception of bodies and the conduction of post mortem examinations is being felt

more each year. The Council decided to build a properly equipped one. A site was chosen, plans approved of, and a tender accepted. At the last moment, a petition from residents in the vicinity of the site (which was in the corner of the Council's Depot) and other considerations made it advisable that another situation should be found. This problem is in the hands of the Estates Committee.

The Council has purchased 11 acres of suitable land on Westfield Common for a cemetery. The Ministry of Health has inspected and approved, the land has been fenced in, $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres planted with shrubs and sown with grass, and the construction of roads and paths is entrusted to the Surveyor's Department. The Parish Churchyard is rapidly becoming full.

At the suggestion of the Herts County Council under the provisions of the "Destruction of Rats Order, 1918", the Council has appointed a professional "vermin exterminator", whose duty it is to destroy rats at the dust shoot. He visits it twice a week, and includes in his armamentarium—poison, ferrets, dogs, and a shot gun. He has counted over a thousand dead bodies in the year, and estimates that fully as many have died of poison and have not been found.

With the exception of 25 houses in the outlying parts of the district the whole of Harpenden has a constant supply of water from the mains under pressure. 66,850,000 gallons, including water for industrial purposes, were supplied for the year, which works out at 24.4 gallons per head per day. In 1922, 61,243,000 gallons were used and the daily consumption was 25 gallons per head. The rainfall during the year was 28.7 inches.

68 houses have been connected with the sewers during the year, making a total of 1335. The total quantity of sewage dealt with was 51,514,680 gallons which at an estimate of 4.5 per house of the population gives 23.5 gallons per head per day. In 1922, the total quantity was 46,994,953, and the average per person 23 gallons.

The sewage works, opened in 1913, continue to work satisfactorily. An officer of the Lea Conservancy Board took five samples for analysis during the year, and presumably these have been found to conform to the required standard of purity as there has been no complaint. One of the higher officials of the Board visited the site and expressed his appreciation of the design and management of the works.

